



INSTYTUT SPRAW PUBLICZNYCH

I N S T I T U T E O F P U B L I C A F F A I R S

ul. Mikołaja Reja 7
02-053 Warszawa
Polska

tel. (48 22) 825 58 72
(48 22) 825 76 80
fax. (48 22) 825 68 08
www.isp.org.pl
e-mail: isp@isp.org.pl

**Adam Mielczarek
Małgorzata Sikorska**

**Poland - Spain
Poland - Sweden**

**Mutual perceptions
during the enlargement of the European Union**

Warsaw, June 2000

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Part I. Poland - Spain: Reciprocal Perceptions (<i>Adam Mielczarek</i>)	
1. Roles of Poland and Spain in Europe - reciprocal observations.....	4
2. Level of Spaniards' friendliness toward Poles and other nations.....	5
3. Perception of Poland and perception of Spain.....	6
4. Perception of a typical Pole and of a typical Spaniard.....	9
5. Spaniards' opinions on Poland and other countries joining the European Union.....	15
6. Conclusion.	16
Part II. Poland - Sweden: Reciprocal Perceptions (<i>Małgorzata Sikorska</i>)	
1. Perception of Poland.....	18
2. Level of Swedes' friendliness toward Poles and other nations.....	21
3. Swedes' opinions on Poland and other countries joining the European Union.....	22
4. Sweden and Swedes - typical Polish associations.....	23
Annex. Survey Information.....	26

Introduction

This report on surveys of reciprocal perceptions between Swedes, Spaniards and Poles is a part of a major research project undertaken by the Institute of Public Affairs, entitled “European Union members’ perception of the advantages, costs and threats associated with the accession of Poland - a critical analysis”.

The purpose of the research is to determine how Poles perceive selected European countries and nations, and how the citizens of these countries perceive Poland and Poles, to analyse the distance existing between countries and their respective citizens, and to investigate the stereotypes that affect reciprocal contacts.

The Western European nations base their image of our country and its citizens on stereotypes. Therefore, an investigation of these stereotypes is particularly important at the time of the discussion of Poland’s admission to the European Union. Conducting these “perceptual” recurrently seem expedient since they constitute an excellent indicator of mutual relations between countries and can portend potential tension and conflict.

The research project has already produced the following publications: A report on a public-opinion poll entitled *Poland – Austria, Mutual perceptions during the enlargement of the European Union*, and a press review entitled *Image of Poland in the European Union press*. The Institute of Public Affairs will be soon conducting public-opinion surveys in Germany and Ukraine.

Our warmest thanks for the assistance in preparation of this study go to Ms. Pilar del Castillo, Chairperson of Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas in Madrid, Mr. Anders Lithner and Prof. Lennart Weibull from the SOM Institute in Gothenburg, as well as Mr. Juan Pablo de Laiglesia, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to Poland, and Mr. Stefan Noreén, former Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Poland.

Part I

Poland - Spain: Reciprocal Perceptions

1. Roles of Poland and Spain in Europe - reciprocal observations

Poland and Spain are distant from one another in more than the geographical sense: Poles know little about Spaniards and Spaniards are as ignorant about Poles. Neither country has a firmly established stereotypical image about the other. A large proportion of Poles as well as Spaniards know downright nothing about the other country - they cannot even formulate a general opinion about it.

This is not surprising: less than 2% of surveyed Spaniards declared having ever been in Poland and only 5% indicated knowing anyone there. Only a little more, 10%, stated that they had Polish acquaintances living in Spain.

However, Spaniards relatively often declared having seen Polish films or having read Polish books (22%), and more than 40% recalled having watched shows about Poland on television. More than one half of polled Spaniards (53%) stated they would gladly spend holidays in Poland.

Although Spaniards view Poland as a relatively interesting tourist destination, the real interest as far as visiting the other country is concentrated in the opposite direction - from Poland to Spain. As many as 83% of surveyed Poles would like to spend holidays in Spain. Consequently, Poles go to Spain in much larger numbers than Spaniards come to Poland. Still, the number of Poles who have travelled to the other side of the Pyrenees is very small - only 5% of Polish respondents declared having been to Spain. Almost one half (47%) admitted to having seen some Spanish films and having read books written by Spanish authors, and 64% recalled having watched shows about Spain on television.

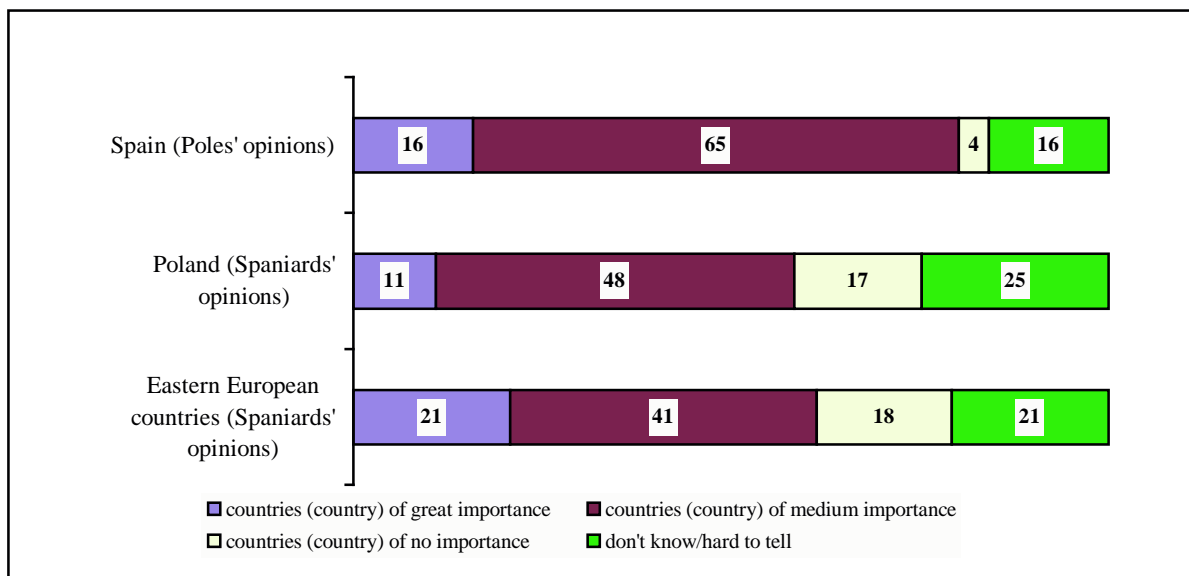
While Polish geography textbooks usually situate Poland in Central Europe, or in Central and Eastern Europe, Poland for Spaniards is one of *los paises del Este*. This term exists in other languages than Spanish and is usually translated in English to "East European countries". However, its literal translation is "Eastern countries" and the term is used to describe those European states that in the past belonged to the Soviet block. Since the two terms were found best suited to the topic of the study, Spanish sociologists that conducted the survey used them when asking their compatriots about their attitude toward our country. The terms "Europe" and "European affairs" also may mean different things to a Spaniard and to a Pole. When European Union citizens speak of Europe, they very often mean the Western European countries grouped within the European Union and not the entire continent in the geographical sense.

Research shows that the notion of "Eastern countries" is still relatively widespread in spite of the fact 10 years have passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall. For 18% of Spanish respondents, the East European countries were of no significance in Europe, whereas 21% had no opinion on that subject whatsoever. On the other hand, 62% of Spaniards stated that these

countries played a significant role in European affairs. It may be concluded, therefore, that Spaniards do not so much negate the role played in Europe by the Central and Eastern European states as still predominantly ignore them or are indifferent to them.

The role played by Poland in European affairs is perceived in a very similar way as the role played on the continent by the whole of Eastern Europe. A similar number of respondents admitted Poland's and Eastern Europe's pan-European significance. The difference in the second case is, of course, that Poland was not viewed as the most important country of the region but only as being among the important ones. Only 11% of Spaniards considered Poland as a country of a great European importance. A medium importance was attributed to Poland by 48% of respondents.

Chart 1. Spaniards' opinions of the European significance of East European countries and Poland, and Poles' opinions about the European significance of Spain (in percent)



This data assumes a meaning when it is compared with the response to an analogous question asked in Poland about Spain. When Poles were questioned about the importance of Spain in Europe, almost nobody responded that it had no significance. The percentage of respondents without any opinion on the subject was also smaller than in the first case. It is clear that the difference between the Spanish perception of Poland and the Polish perception of Spain is that no one in Poland needs to be convinced that Spain is located in Europe, whereas many Spaniards do not feel the same as concerns *los países del Este*.

2. Level of Spaniards' friendliness toward Poles and other nations

Spaniards do not seem to have any emotions about Poles. When they are asked about their friendly and unfriendly feelings toward various European nations, Poles get marks that testify to the absence of unfriendly feelings toward them but that also place them within the group of countries that are equally distant from Spain (Table 1). More characteristic of the marks given by Spaniards to the inhabitants of our part of Europe than the average level of friendliness toward Poles is the significant level of unfriendliness toward Russians.

Table 1. Level of Spaniards' friendly feelings for various nations (in percent)

Nation	Very friendly	Friendly	Neither friendly nor unfriendly	Unfriendly	Very unfriendly	Hard to tell / don't know
Swedes	15	21	33	8	5	19
Germans	15	20	39	9	8	10
French	15	19	29	16	13	9
Poles	11	18	36	8	5	24
Russians	11	16	33	11	10	19
Czechs	10	16	37	8	4	26
Hungarians	9	15	36	8	4	28

Respondents used a five-grade scale to answer the question, on which 1 stood for very friendly feelings and 5 for very unfriendly feelings. The remaining figures expressed all the opinions in between.

A certain characteristic regularity is perceivable here: even in the response to the question about feelings toward individual European nations, the percentage of “don't know” responses with respect to Central and East European states was more than twice that of the response concerning the Western Europeans. Obviously, most Spaniards had a well established opinion about their direct neighbours - French (91%) and Germans (90%), whereas 81% had an opinion about Russians and Swedes. As concerns Poles, 76% of the respondents had an opinion, even if only a neutral one.

3. Perception of Poland and perception of Spain

Spaniards' perception of Poland

Spaniards have an extremely difficult time viewing our economic and political system in Western European standards - more than one half of respondents had trouble formulating an opinion on the subject. Only 15-17% recognised that Poland was an European state with a parliamentary system and market economy. A large group - 21% - did not agree with the statement that Poland was living a period of a rapid economic growth (Table 2).

Table 2. Spaniards' opinions about Poland (in percent)

<i>Poland is a country where:</i>	Agree	Agree and disagree to the same extent	Don't agree	Hard to tell / don't know
There is a rapid economic growth	14	11	21	54
Bureaucracy stands in the way of getting the simplest things done	19	8	7	66
Work is well organised	16	11	13	60
There is corruption	17	9	12	63
There is a parliamentary system as in Western Europe	17	9	15	59
Politicians are incompetent	15	11	9	65
The Catholic Church is very influential	34	7	9	54
There is a market economy as in Western Europe	15	10	18	57
Personal freedoms are respected	15	10	16	59

Respondents were expressing opinions as to the veracity of the presented statements using a seven-grade scale from 0 to 6 (0 - total disagreement, 6 - total agreement). To render the results more legible, we have joined responses 0, 1 and 2 (considering them a negation of the statement), and responses 4, 5 and 6 (considering them a confirmation of the statement). The remaining value 3 is considered an "Agree and disagree to the same extent" response.

It is possible that Poland is still burdened in Spain with the perception of an *East European* country, of which Spaniards know only that for many years it has been ruled by a system other than that operating in most of Western Europe. This is why a decisive majority of respondents with any opinion at all was convinced, more than of anything else, that Poland was not experiencing any economic growth and was instead inclined to see us as a country with a rampant corruption, incompetence and bureaucracy. However, these opinions indicate more an absence of any idea as to what Poland and Eastern Europe look like today than an established stereotype.

What Spaniards associate with more than the economic order or political system when they think about Poland is the presence of the Catholic Church. Although, once again, more than one half of respondents lacked any opinion, one third confirmed that the Church played a significant role in Poland. This was quite probably the only moment in the Spanish survey that captured the existence of an actual stereotype. It was confirmed later when the survey dealt with Spaniards' characterisation not of Poland as a country but of a typical Pole.

Poles' perception of Spain

The perception of Spain by Poles is incomparably more even handed. First of all, it is evident that while an absolute majority of Spaniards have no idea whatsoever about Poland's political and economic system, Poles are familiar with the Spanish system to a certain extent, at least as concerns the most fundamental issues (Table 3). To begin with, it is evident to Poles that Spain is a country with a parliamentary system, market economy and respect for individual freedoms. The percentage of respondents that questioned these statements was marginal. Spain is also perceived as a country where the economy is growing rapidly.

Table 3. Poles' opinions about Spain (in percent)

<i>Spain is a country where:</i>	Agree	Agree and disagree to the same extent	Don't agree	Hard to tell / don't know
There is a rapid economic growth	44	20	6	30
Bureaucracy stands in the way of getting the simplest things done	12	19	17	52
Work is well organised	34	20	5	41
There is corruption	18	21	13	48
There is a parliamentary system as in Western Europe	51	12	3	34
Politicians are incompetent	11	19	22	48
The Catholic Church is very influential	49	13	5	33
There is market economy as in Western Europe	25	21	16	38
Personal freedoms are respected	61	11	2	26

In the Polish survey, respondents were expressing opinions as to the veracity of the presented statements using a five-grade scale from 1 to 5 (1 - total agreement, 5 - total disagreement). To render the results more legible, we have joined responses 1 and 2 (considering them a confirmation of the statement), and responses 4 and 5 (considering them a negation of the statement). The remaining value 3 is considered an "Agree and disagree to the same extent" response.

Therefore, what Poles know about Spain is mainly that it is a country with an economic and political system that meets the basic European standards, and that it is affluent. Approximately one half of Polish respondents agreed on these issues. On the other hand, they had more difficulty expressing opinions about issues that were more specific, such as the quality of the Spanish political system, level of competence among Spanish politicians, bureaucracy, corruption or influence of the Church. Here, opinions were more divided.

It is hard to conclude that the focus put by respondents on corruption is a Polish perception of it as a particularly Spanish feature. It may be that a certain number of responses emphasising that problem stemmed from the opinion that corruption affected all European Union countries. A certain role could also have been played by the stereotype of the southern, Latin country. As to the fact that a large proportion of Polish respondents pointed to the role played by the Church in Spain's life, this may simply mean that many Poles view Spain as a Catholic country.

4. Perception of a typical Pole and of a typical Spaniard

Spaniards' perception of a typical Pole

As when trying to characterise Poland, Spaniards had a difficult time describing a typical Pole. It seems that they do not share a common stereotype of a Pole or, perhaps, Spanish respondents could not find that stereotype in the group at features presented to them in the survey. As in the case of characterising Poland as a country, more than one half of respondents requested to describe a typical Pole selected the “don’t know” or “neither yes nor no” response (Table 4).

Spaniards pointed most often to the following features describing a typical Pole: assiduousness, religiosity and backwardness. As for most of the other features, respondents did not focus on anything particularly negative and, rather to the contrary, gave Poles quite positive marks. Features that were indicated the least frequently were tolerance and efficiency. However, since the perception based on all the features mentioned above was indicated by less than one third of respondents, it cannot be viewed as bearing the weight of an existing stereotype.

Although the perception is not clear-cut, the fact remains that Spaniards assess Poles rather positively. Negative opinions about us were rare. Only very few respondents (6-8%) described a typical Pole as lazy, unpleasant, dishonest, irresponsible, insubordinate, inefficient or intolerant. Some 20% tended to emphasise the opposite, positive features, whereas as many as 28% considered assiduousness as a feature characteristic of a Pole. Also 28% of respondents believed that a typical Pole was religious.

Table 4. Spaniards' perception of a typical Pole (in percent)

	1 + 2	3	4 + 5		Hard to tell / don't know
assiduous	28	16	6	lazy	50
tolerant	19	18	8	intolerant	55
modern	10	18	24	backward	48
progressive	13	16	16	conservative	55
efficient	19	18	7	inefficient	56
honest	22	16	6	dishonest	56
friendly	24	16	7	unfriendly	53
tidy	14	18	7	sloppy	61
religious	28	12	8	non-religious	52
responsible	21	18	6	irresponsible	55
disciplined	21	16	8	insubordinate	55

Assessments were effected according to a five-grade scale from 1 to 5, where 1 referred to a decisively positive assessment (ex. very assiduous) and 5 - to a very negative one (ex. very lazy). To render the result more legible, we have joined responses 1 and 2 (positive) and 4 and 5 (negative). The remaining value 3 is considered as a “neither yes nor no” response.

The following two negative features were mentioned the most often: backwardness (24%) and conservatism (by fewer respondents - 16%). It may be that the perception of a Pole as a backward person is linked, in particular, with the perception of Poland as part of Eastern Europe (we have referred to this issue the beginning of this report).

Poles' perception of a typical Spaniard

The assessment of a typical Spaniard obtained in the Polish survey looks very differently. To Poles, a typical Spaniard is modern, friendly, tolerant, tidy and educated, and also religious (Table 5). But Polish respondents were more doubtful when it came to a Spaniard's qualities as a worker - his discipline, assiduousness, responsibility and honesty. It seems that, on one hand, Poles perceived a Spaniard as a citizen of the modern Western Europe, while on the other, they succumbed to the stereotype of a hot-blooded Southerner not always responsible.

As was the case for Spanish respondents, Poles as a rule did not attribute any predominantly negative features to Spaniards. Most responses that were not outright positive belonged to the "neither yes nor no" category.

Table 5. Poles' perception of a typical Spaniard (in percent)

	1 + 2	3	4 + 5	
assiduous	37	30	33	lazy
tolerant	33	33	34	intolerant
modern	31	47	22	conservative
educated	34	45	21	uneducated
efficient	32	47	21	inefficient
honest	25	40	35	dishonest
tidy	45	35	20	sloppy
friendly	34	44	22	unfriendly
religious	80	15	5	non-religious
responsible	30	48	22	irresponsible
disciplined	22	40	38	insubordinate

Assessments were effected according to a five-grade scale from 1 to 5, where 1 referred to a decisively positive assessment (ex. very assiduous) and 5 - to a decisively negative one (ex. very lazy). To render the results more legible, we have joined responses 1 and 2 (positive) and 4 and 5 (negative). The remaining value 3 is considered a "neither yes nor no" response. The survey conducted in Poland did not provide the "don't know" option.

Since the Polish survey used a different questioning method than the one used in Spain (there was no "hard to tell / don't know" option), there is no possibility of comparing whether the Spaniard's stereotype existing in Poland is stronger than the Pole's stereotype existing in Spain.

Poles' and Spaniards' self-stereotypes

Information referring to national self-stereotypes (Tables 6 and 7) is an important supplement to stereotype research.¹

The feature most frequently mentioned by Poles requested to describe themselves was religiosity (80%). They also stated, although much less frequently, that a typical Pole was quite friendly and assiduous. At the same time, a large proportion of respondents pointed at negative Polish features - more than one third stated that Poles were dishonest (only one

¹ The information concerning self-assessment by Poles comes from a survey conducted in June 1999 by Pracownia Badań Społecznych (*Social Research Workshop*) in Sopot. As in the case of a Pole's and a Spaniard's assessment mentioned earlier, questioning methods used in Spain and Poland were slightly different (there was no "don't know" option in the Polish survey) and so were the lists of features presented to respondents.

quarter disagreed) and a similar number pointed at our intolerance and laziness, although opinions concerning the last two features were evenly divided.

Table 6. Poles' self-stereotype (in percent)

	1 + 2	3	4 + 5	
assiduous	37	30	33	lazy
tolerant	33	33	34	intolerant
modern	31	47	22	conservative
educated	34	45	21	uneducated
efficient	32	47	21	inefficient
honest	25	40	35	dishonest
friendly	45	35	20	unfriendly
tidy	34	44	22	sloppy
religious	80	15	5	non-religious
responsible	30	48	22	irresponsible
disciplined	22	40	38	insubordinate

Assessments were effected according to a five-grade scale from 1 to 5, where 1 referred to a decisively positive assessment (ex. very assiduous) and 5 - to a decisively negative one (ex. very lazy). To render the results more legible, we have joined responses 1 and 2 (positive) and 4 and 5 (negative). The remaining value 3 is considered a "neither yes nor no" response. The survey conducted in Poland did not provide the "don't know" option.

Yet in general, save on the issue of religiosity, Poles' opinions about themselves were very mixed - a similar number of respondents indicated a given feature and its opposite. Consequently, the resulting self-stereotype does not include any unequivocally positive or negative traits. Perhaps it is symptomatic of some identity crisis experienced by Poles after 10 years of systemic transformations, or it may be simply that certain important elements of Poles' self-assessment were not included in the list of features presented to respondents.

In this context, we should return briefly to the Pole's stereotype that came out of the survey conducted in Spain. We said that Spaniards could not build a description of a typical Pole on the basis of features presented to them in the survey. And then it appeared that neither could the Polish respondents build a clear self-description using these features. Nevertheless, some characteristic elements pointed out by Spaniards were reflected in the Polish self-description, particularly religiosity and friendliness. Also, the Polish self-description matches to a certain extent what Spaniards think about us: modernity, efficiency and tolerance are not our most typical traits. On the other hand, the Polish self-description does not match the positive opinion held by Spaniards of our assiduousness and honesty.

The Spanish self-assessment was totally different from the Polish self-assessment. Spaniards recognised themselves without any difficulty in the group of features presented in the survey. Indeed, they tended to indicate most positive features when describing their typical compatriot. The only positive traits indicated by less than 50% of respondents were tidiness, discipline, religiosity and progressiveness.

Table 7. Spaniards' self-stereotype (in percent)

	1 + 2	3	4 + 5		Hard to tell / don't know
assiduous	61	25	12	lazy	2
tolerant	54	27	15	intolerant	4
progressive	47	28	16	conservative	9
modern	61	24	12	backward	3
efficient	56	30	9	inefficient	5
honest	55	30	12	dishonest	3
friendly	71	18	8	unfriendly	3
tidy	38	37	19	sloppy	6
religious	44	33	20	non-religious	3
responsible	54	31	11	irresponsible	4
disciplined	43	34	18	insubordinate	5

Assessments were effected according to a five-grade scale from 1 to 5, where 1 referred to a decisively positive assessment (ex. very assiduous) and 5 - to a decisively negative one (ex. very lazy). To render the results more legible, we have joined responses 1 and 2 (positive) and 4 and 5 (negative). The remaining value 3 is considered as a "neither yes nor no" response.

When assessing their typical compatriot, Spaniards most often pointed to his friendliness, assiduousness and modernity (over 60%). Perceptions held by Poles about a typical Spaniard include elements that Spaniards themselves accentuated (modernity, friendliness) as well as those clearly opposing their self-stereotype. For example, Poles often pointed to Spaniards' religiosity, which is not reflected in the self-stereotype, and, moreover, very few Poles stressed Spaniards' assiduousness.

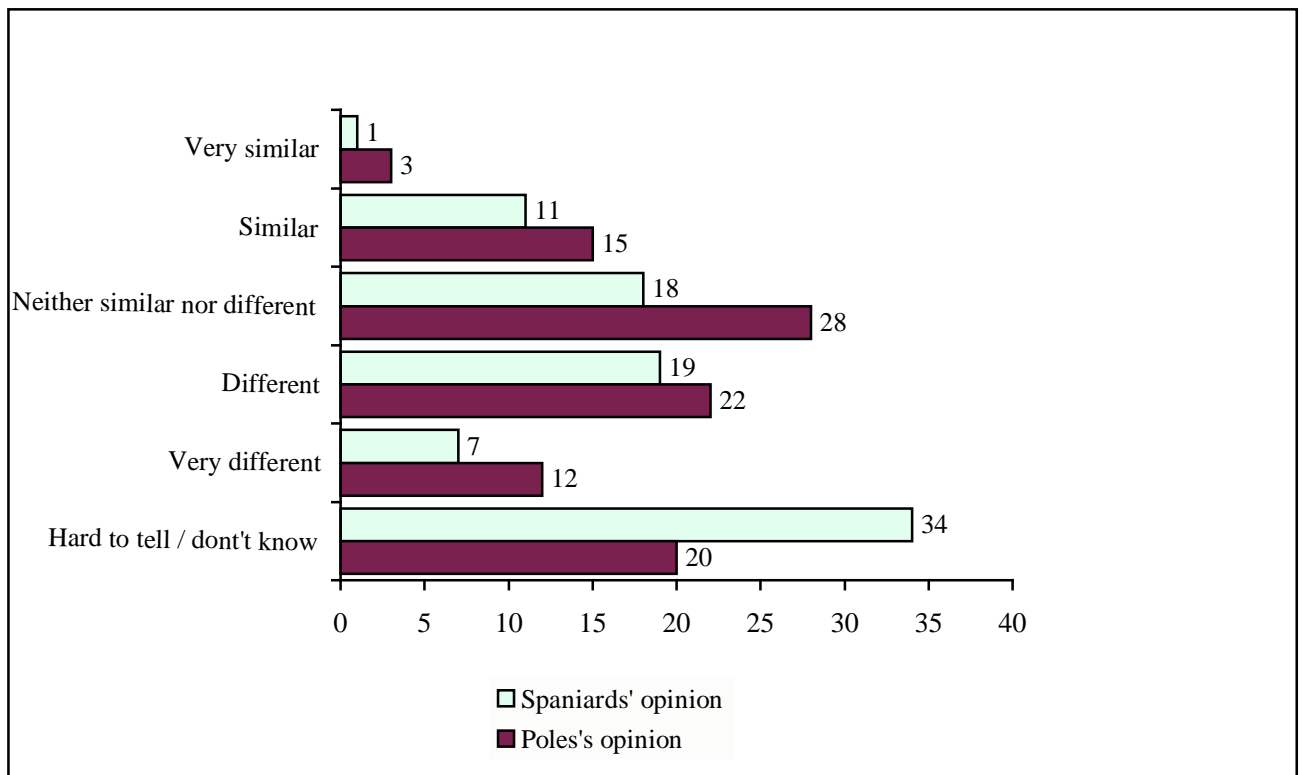
In conclusion, we ought to compare the Polish and Spanish self-assessments. Spaniards reach for negative features when describing their typical compatriot infinitely less often than when Poles describe theirs. The rule in the Spanish case is that the number of responses referring to a positive trait is several times higher than that referring to its opposite.

In the Polish self-assessment on the other hand, the number of responses involving negative traits is, as a rule, very similar to that involving positive ones (Spaniards almost always point to their positive traits in numbers several times higher than to the negative ones). In the Polish survey, there is only one pair of opposite features on the entire list (friendly/unfriendly) where the number of responses pointing to the positive feature is twice larger than the number of responses pointing at its negative counterpart (without counting the religious/non-religious antinomy, which ought not to be examined in these terms). The conclusion is that Poles are very self-critical.

The level of distance between Spaniards and Poles

Poles are somewhat more inclined to see similarities between the two nations (Chart 2), although they also stress the differences more often. This means that their opinion on the subject is better established.

Chart 2. Opinions as to similarities/dissimilarities between Poles and Spaniards



Spaniards on the other hand place Poland in Eastern Europe, a place that in their eyes is somewhat different from the Europe they inhabit. It is a creature difficult to describe in terms of similarities and differences.

Interestingly, a conviction held about similarities or differences between nations does not necessarily translate into a willingness to have contacts with or get closer to the citizens of the other country.

Both the Polish and Spanish survey included a question that aimed at establishing the distance felt by representatives of both nations to each other (Chart 3).²

² The question was designed according to the Bogardus scale, which - to put it simply - measures the level of distance between representatives of various nations.

Chart 3. Level of Spaniards' distance with respect to Poles and vice-versa



Percentage of "yes" answers. Two questions were not asked in Spanish survey

Spaniards are much more open with respect to Poles than the other way round. Almost in all cases there is a difference of approx. 20 percentage points in the level of acceptance of a representative of the other nation.

In spite of apprehensions felt in many other EU countries, Spaniards go as far as being ready to grant Poles the Spanish citizenship. But both Spaniards and Poles are the least willing to provide their counterparts with the right to decide matters concerning their region - for example having a seat on the municipal of their town (although 64% of Spaniards would still consent to that role being played by a Pole). More than one half of Poles would not want a Spaniard to become a member of their family or a manager of the company where they work (unfortunately, these two questions were not asked in the Spanish survey). This is the case despite the fact that Spaniards' image in Poland is much more attractive and contains many fewer negative elements than Poles' image in Spain. While Spaniards may have a generally positive attitude toward us, they still perceive us as inhabitants of a backward country. Poles, on the other hand, often point out the modernity of Spain.

5. Spaniards' opinions on Poland and other countries joining the European Union

The attitude of the Spanish public opinion toward the expansion of the European Union is quite positive. According to the survey, most Spaniards believe that Poland joining the EU will bring more benefits than damage.

Table 8. Spaniards' opinions as to the consequences of Poland joining the European Union (in percent)

<i>Will the accession of Poland to the European Union have positive or negative consequences for:</i>	Positive	Neither positive nor negative	Negative	Don't know / hard to tell
Regular people like yourself	33	35	9	23
Spain	45	15	12	28
EU as a whole	51	13	10	26

As shown in Table 8, the level of the declared apprehension reaches only 9-12% and most respondents are inclined to view Poland's future accession to the European Union as a positive development. More than one half believes that it will be beneficial for the entire European Union and one third even sees in it a benefit for themselves. Therefore, it seems that Spaniards are sold on the rationality of expanding the EU and, even if they do not perceive in it any particular advantage for themselves, neither do they foresee any harm as a result of the process.

More than one half of surveyed Spaniards also acquiesces to the European Union accepting other post-Communist countries listed in the questionnaire (Table 9). The opposition to their accession does not exceed 14%. In general, the difference between the level of acquiescence with respect to various countries is very small, although Poland's accession is accepted most readily. It seems that Spanish respondents differentiate between individual *los países del Este* only to a very small extent. This applies even to those countries whose accession to the European Union is a matter of a quite distant future, such as Bulgaria.

Table 9. Spaniards' opinions as to the acceptance of new members to the European Union (in percent)

<i>Which of the following countries should become members of the European Union?</i>			
Country	Yes	No	Don't know / no answer
Poland	63	10	27
Hungary	61	11	28
Czech Republic	60	12	28
Bulgaria	59	13	28
Slovakia	57	14	29
Slovenia	56	14	30

Respondents who stated that a given country should become a member of the European Union were asked when that accession should take place. In all cases, close to one half of respondents believed that it should happen within the next five years (Table 10). Here too it is obvious that Spanish respondents do not differentiate between candidates for the EU

membership from the former Communist block. Therefore, the rate of consent for the admission of post-Communist states to the EU is more an expression of the acceptance of the idea of EU expansion than the desire to accept a specific country.

Table 10. Spaniards' opinions as to the preferred pace of accepting new members to the European Union (in percent)

Country	No later than in 5 years	In 5 to 10 years	Don't know / no answer	Percentage base
Poland	49	30	16	(1556)
Czech Republic	49	31	15	(1492)
Hungary	48	32	15	(1519)
Bulgaria	47	31	15	(1450)
Slovenia	47	31	16	(1383)
Slovakia	47	32	16	(1417)

Only respondents who had indicated that a given country should become an EU member were asked this question.

Respondents who had indicated that Poland should become a member of the European Union were asked why it should be admitted. Table 11 presents the distribution of responses.

Table 11. Reasons presented by the proponents of admitting Poland to the European Union (in percent)

Reason	Percentage
Possibility of broadening the market and increasing trade volume	62
Growth of EU's international importance after expansion	42
Better international security in Europe	25
Polish cultural values and traditions	16
Poles' knowledge and education	13
Other	5

Only respondents who had indicated that Poland should become an EU member were asked this question. Two answers could be selected.

The most frequently mentioned reason was the hope that the trade volume would increase as a result of the EU expansion. Arguments that sound convincing to Spaniards refer to the growth of the economic and (to a lesser extent) political and defence potential of the European Union. Reasons referring to some particular values or qualities that Poles could possibly contribute to Europe were of a secondary importance.

Spaniards' apprehensions seem to stem from their conviction that there exists a large economic gap between Poland and the European Union (Table 12). It may be assumed that opponents of our accession to the EU view Poland as a poor country which, upon joining, will become an exporter of a cheap labour force and a receiver of assistance funds. These apprehensions have their obvious source in the Spaniards' perception of our part of Europe. Their fear that upon Poland's accession the rate of crime would increase in the EU can be also attributed to their perception of our country as less civilised.

Table 12. Reasons presented by opponents of admitting Poland to the European Union (in percent)

Reason	Percentage
Inflow of a cheap labour force	41
Higher financial burden for current EU members	37
Deterioration of EU functioning after expansion	27
Crime rate growth	21
Backwardness of the Polish agriculture	9
Environmental protection problems (ecology)	3
Other	11

Only respondents who had indicated that Poland should not become an EU member were asked the question (N = 212). Two answers could be selected.

The argument that an expanded European Union would not function as well as it does now is not very popular in Spain. A particular attention should be paid to the fact that only 9% of Spaniards pointed at the backwardness of the Polish agriculture. It turns out that this issue - which is so important in high-level accession negotiations - is not perceived by the citizens of the highly agrarian Spain as very significant.

6. Conclusion

Spaniards lack an established opinion about Poland and Poles. The outcome of the surveys gives grounds to conclude that an average Spaniard does not have enough knowledge about Eastern Europe to be aware of such issues as whether there is any difference in the progress of economic reforms in Poland and Bulgaria. Therefore, one may suspect that a large proportion of opinions expressed by Spaniards about Poland stems from the overall East European stereotype. This is especially true as concerns Spaniards' predominant opinion of Poland as a backward country with a weak and poorly organised economy and political system.

This means that the information concerning Polish achievements in building a free-market economy and a liberal-democratic political system is not reaching the Spanish public opinion. Spaniards probably know as little about our problems as they do about our successes. Nevertheless, the low level of knowledge about transformations taking place in Central and Eastern Europe does not seem to have any major influence on Spaniards' consent to Poland joining the European Union.

How can that generally friendly Spanish attitude to Poland and to the idea of it becoming an EU member be explained? First of all, it should not be overestimated. When Spanish respondents were asked about their attitude to various nations, Poles usually got good marks. However, the marks given to Poland were not that different from those given to other countries of our region. The outcome of the survey indicates that the Spanish public opinion has been already convinced of the necessity to include some of the East European countries in the EU and that the issue does not provoke much emotion. This is probably why all the post-Communist countries mentioned in the survey (save for Russia) were perceived as probable future EU members.

It seems that Spaniards accept the prospect of an expanded European Union and consider it generally beneficial to its economy and political significance as a whole. However, they have little knowledge of specific benefits and disadvantages that may affect their country as a result of accepting individual candidates.

Our perception of a typical Spaniard is also probably somewhat influenced by the Polish stereotype of a Western European. It is more a product of the attractiveness of Western Europe than of what Poles know about Spain.

At the same time, the surveys exposed two disconcerting phenomena. The first is that Poles have a very low self-opinion about themselves. We seem to have major problems with our cultural identity, particularly with recognising ourselves in the set of values on which the self-evaluation survey was based. This subject deserves a separate examination. The second is that Poles wish to maintain a relatively large distance between themselves and Spaniards, in spite of declaring friendly feelings toward Spain and hoping for a political integration with it inside the European Union.

The results of both the Polish and the Spanish survey re-confirm that the Eastern Europe's desire to join the European Union and Western Europe's consent for the Union's expansion do not stem from a perception of a common cultural heritage or from a wish to establish closer links between the inhabitants of other European countries. Instead, they have their source in the hope for an overall improvement of the economic situation and political security. For it is the Spanish "modernity" that Poles admire the most and it is the opportunity to "increase the trade volume" that Spaniards cite as an argument in favour of accepting Poland to the European Union. These are not national traits but ideas behind which there is a hope for a future improvement of one's own standard of living.

Part II

Poland – Sweden. Reciprocal Perceptions

1. Perception of Poland

The knowledge of Poland among Swedes comes mainly from books or television shows about our country, and is associated with having Polish friends or acquaintances that live in Sweden, for most part immigrants. Particularly interesting is the large proportion of Swedes (43%) who have read books or watched television shows about our country. On the other hand, only a small percentage of Swedish respondents declared having been following news about Poland or having been to Poland on business. The percentage of Swedes who have visited Poland as tourists is also small (Table 1).

Table 1. Swedes' knowledge of Poland (in percent)

Question	Yes	No	Hard to tell / don't know
<i>Have you ever visited Poland as a tourist?</i>	13	86	1
<i>Have you ever been to Poland on business?</i>	4	95	1
<i>Do you have Polish friends or acquaintances who live in Poland?</i>	8	91	1
<i>Do you have Polish friends or acquaintances who live in Sweden?</i>	28	71	1
<i>Have you ever read books or seen television shows about Poland?</i>	43	49	8
<i>Do you follow news about Poland regularly?</i>	6	91	3

Therefore, it seems that Poland evokes a certain amount of interest in Swedes (almost one half of respondents has read a Polish book or watched a show about Poland on television), but that only rarely means that they have ever visited our country or made an effort to follow news about Poland.

Yet acquiring knowledge about Poland from books and television, or from Polish acquaintances, is not sufficient in order to develop a precise opinion about specific aspects of our country's functioning. In case of each area given to respondents for assessment (economy and political system), at least one half answered by *Hard to tell*, whereas others selected a response from the middle of the scale - *Neither agree nor disagree* (Table 2). Not many respondents decided on an unequivocal answer, either positive or negative. Swedes demonstrated more decisiveness only with respect to the statement *The Catholic Church in Poland is overly influential* - 40% of respondents answered with *Agree* or *Agree totally*.

Table 2. Swedes' opinions about Poland (in percent)

<i>Poland is a country where:</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree and disagree to the same extent	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to tell / don't know
There is a rapid economic growth	11	14	14	7	4	51
Bureaucracy stands in the way of getting the simplest things done	10	16	13	3	1	58
Work is well organised	2	3	16	14	6	61
There is corruption	9	13	12	4	2	59
Parliamentary system functions properly	2	6	19	9	5	59
Politicians are incompetent	3	5	25	7	2	68
Civil liberties are respected	2	7	28	20	4	60
Catholic Church is overly influential	21	19	6	1	0.3	54
Market economy functions properly	2	7	17	8	4	62

The question used a ten-grade scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 stood for Strongly disagree and 10 for Strongly agree). To render the results more legible, we converted the results to a five-grade scale. Since the figures were rounded, horizontal rows may not add up to 100%.

Swedes are rather strongly convinced that, in Poland, *bureaucracy stands in the way of getting the simplest things done* (26% of *Agree* and *Strongly agree* responses), that *there is a rapid economic growth* (25%) and that *there is corruption* (22%). Thus Swedes have a somewhat negative opinion of the Polish public life, which on one hand is “oppressed” by over-bureaucratisation and on the other by corruption.

Interestingly, even though one quarter of respondents was of the opinion that *there is a rapid economic growth* in Poland, only 9% agreed with the statement that *market economy functions properly* in our country. Therefore, one may assume that Swedes are inclined to attribute the high pace of economic development to external conditions or to factors that cannot be associated with building a stable market economy “from the ground up”.

Swedish respondents had the most difficulty with forming an unequivocal opinion with respect to the statements that, in Poland, *politicians are incompetent* (as many as 68% *Hard to tell* and 25% *Agree and disagree to the same extent* responses) and *civil liberties are respected* (60% and 28% respectively). Therefore, Swedes find it rather difficult to assess the political functioning of our country.

It is always a good idea to compare opinions expressed about a foreign country with those referring to individual social and political areas in one's own homeland. While Swedes see Poland before all else as a country with an overdeveloped bureaucracy and a slow economic growth rate, they consider Sweden as a place where *work is well organised* (57% of joined *Agree* and *Strongly agree* responses) and where *civil liberties are respected* (54%). Swedes also positively assess the pace of their country's economic development (48%) and the functioning of their market economy (43%) (Table 3).

Table 3. Swedes' opinions about their own country (in percent)

<i>Sweden is a country where:</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree and disagree to the same extent	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to tell / don't know
There is a rapid economic growth	18	30	33	7	3	9
Bureaucracy stands in the way of getting the simplest things done	24	26	25	11	4	10
Work is well organised	22	35	25	5	4	9
There is corruption	3	5	22	25	27	19
Parliamentary system functions properly	16	25	33	10	7	10
Politicians are incompetent	12	18	30	17	11	12
Civil liberties are respected	24	30	26	6	5	8
Catholic Church is overly influential	3	6	24	24	29	14
Market economy functions properly	15	28	31	5	4	17

The question used a ten-grade scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 stood for Strongly disagree and 10 for Strongly agree). To render the results more legible, we converted the results to a five-grade scale. Since the figures were rounded, horizontal rows may not add up to 100%.

It is worth noting that as many as one half of Swedish respondents agreed with the statement that in their country *bureaucracy stands in the way of getting the simplest things done*. The Swedish approach to the statement that in Sweden *politicians are incompetent* is ambivalent.

Therefore, it seems that while Swedes have a positive opinion of the economic functioning of their country and its respect for civil liberties, they are much less enthusiastic about the organisation of public life (which they believe is dominated by bureaucracy) and competence of politicians.

It is interesting to compare the perceptions that Swedes have of Poland and Sweden (Table 4). There is a difference in perceiving the position of and influence exerted by the Catholic Church, as well as the level of corruption, which is rampant in Poland but only minimal in Sweden's social and political life. Poland differs from Sweden also by its poor organisation of work. Interestingly, Swedes perceive a significant similarity between Poland and their country as concerns the incompetence of politicians and the bureaucracy standing in the way of getting the simplest things done. The pace of economic growth in both countries is also assessed by Swedish respondents as being at a similar level.

Table 4. Swedes' opinions about Poland and their own country (in percent)

<i>Poland/Sweden is a country where:</i>	Poland	Sweden	Difference
Catholic Church is overly influential	8.12	3.06	5.06
There is corruption	6.44	2.99	3.45
Work is well organised	3.61	6.82	3.21
Civil liberties are respected	4.54	6.60	2.06
Market economy functions properly	4.67	6.36	1.69
Parliamentary system functions properly	4.34	5.93	1.59
There is a rapid economic growth	6.17	6.47	0.30
Bureaucracy stands in the way of getting the simplest things done	6.79	6.53	0.26

Responses on a ten-grade scale: 0 - Strongly agree; 10 - Strongly disagree.

To sum up, one may say that Swedes, despite their declared knowledge of Poland based on books, films and having Polish acquaintances, have a decisively difficult time trying to assess unequivocally the condition of Poland after social and economic transformations.

2. Level of Swedes' friendliness toward Poles and other nations

Swedes are rather sparing in expressing their dislikes - they are not decisively unfriendly toward any of the nations named in the survey. Their predominant feeling is indifference (a large number of responses consisted in *Neither unfriendly nor friendly* and *Hard to tell*). Among the nations finding most favour with Swedes are Swedes themselves, as well as Britons, Americans and Austrians (an average exceeding or approximating six grade points - Table 5). Swedish respondents were the least friendly toward Russians.

Table 5. The level of Swedes' friendliness toward other nations (in percent)

Nation	Very friendly	Friendly	Neither friendly nor unfriendly	Unfriendly	Very unfriendly	Hard to tell	Average scale grade
Swedes	31	25	28	1	1	17	7.54
Britons	13	24	38	2	1	22	6.50
Americans	11	20	41	4	2	22	6.12
Austrians	8	15	45	3	2	29	5.94
French	5	13	49	5	2	26	5.52
Hungarians	5	8	49	4	1	33	5.36
Czechs	4	8	49	4	2	34	5.31
Germans	5	11	46	11	5	23	5.03
Poles	3	7	48	8	4	30	4.92
Russians	3	5	45	10	7	30	4.58

Answers were given according to a ten-grade scale, on which 1 stood for very friendly feelings and 10 for very unfriendly. To render the results more legible, we converted them to a five-grade scale. Since the figures were rounded, horizontal rows may not add up to 100%.

At a first glance, the results presented in Table 5 are not very positive for our country - Swedes felt less friendly only with respect to Russians. However, one ought to note that as many as 48% of Swedish respondents had neither any friendly or unfriendly feelings toward Poles, as well as toward Hungarians and Czechs, and that almost one third was unable to form any opinion on that issue (as indicated by the *Hard to tell* response). It seems, therefore, that Swedes are rather indifferent to us as well as to other nations.

It is worth adding that more negative feelings toward Poland were expressed by less educated respondents, and more frequently by men than women (the latter were in general more sparing in expressing both friendly and unfriendly feelings). Significantly, those respondents who visited our country, have Polish acquaintances, or read books or watched TV shows about Poland declared a friendlier attitude toward us than the others. Hence, the following interdependency was confirmed: The more one knows about or has contact with a country, the friendlier one feels toward it.

3. Swedes' opinions on Poland and other countries joining the European Union

The absence of a precise opinion about Poland is also apparent when Swedes talk about the expansion of the European Union. Even with relation to the four Baltic states - including Poland - which Swedes would welcome particularly warmly in the EU club, at least one half of respondents had no established opinion and settled for the *Hard to tell* response (Table 6). Let us recall for the sake of a comparison that the same response was selected by a maximum of only 16% of Austrians and Spaniards.¹ Therefore, it is evident that the issue of the enlargement of the European Union is decisively less important to Swedes than to other countries.

Table 6. Swedes' opinions on admitting new European Union members (in percent)

Country	1. Should join the EU within 5 years	2. Should join the EU between 5 to 10 years	3. Should join the EU later than in 10 years	Should not join the EU	Hard to tell	Difference in the total of responses 1, 2 and 3, and response 4
Estonia	23	13	6	4	54	+37
Latvia	21	13	7	4	55	+37
Poland	22	12	6	4	56	+36
Lithuania	20	13	7	5	55	+36
Czech Republic	18	12	8	5	57	+33
Hungary	18	12	7	4	59	+33
Slovenia	13	12	9	6	60	+28
Bulgaria	9	11	10	7	63	+24
Russia	6	8	11	17	58	+8
Turkey	7	8	9	17	59	+8

¹ Comp.: M. Sikorska, *Poland - Austria: Mutual perceptions during the enlargement of the European Union*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw 2000; and Part I of this publication by Adam Milczarek.

Poland's accession to the European Union within the next five years was supported by 22% of Swedish respondents², whereas 12% considered that the accession should take place later (between five and ten years). Swedes expressed the same attitude toward Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.³ All four Baltic states are geographically, historically and economically closer to Sweden than other candidates for a membership in the EU. Therefore, it seems that Swedes view Poland's accession to the European Union as part of a package including all candidate states bordering on the Baltic, without assuming any singular position with respect to our country.

It is worth noting that Poland's speedy accession to the EU was favoured by highly educated respondents (whose opinions were also more decisive) and by those in a higher age bracket. A higher rate of consent for Poland's admission to the Union was also linked to the level of our country's knowledge - respondents who had visited Poland, read books or watched TV shows about it were more inclined to accept it in the EU. Similarly, a higher rate of acceptance for Poland's accession was found among respondents who had expressed unequivocal and positive opinions about the pace of Polish economic growth and recognised our country's respect for civil liberties.

On the other hand, Swedish respondents were definitely opposed to the Turkish and Russian accession to the European Union.

4. Sweden and Swedes - typical Polish associations

Knowledge of Sweden and the initial associations with the country

Poles declared a relatively limited knowledge of Sweden based mainly on personal contacts - either by having visited it or by knowing Swedes who lived in Poland. Nevertheless, Poles are certainly interested in Sweden - many respondents declared having read a book written by a Swede and seen Swedish films, as well as having watched television shows about Sweden (Table 7).

The level of Poles' knowledge of Sweden is determined only by their education (the higher the education, the more frequent contacts with Sweden, the larger the number of books read about it, etc.), and not by income level or age.

Table 7. Poles' knowledge of Sweden (in percent)

Question	Yes	No	Hard to tell / don't know
<i>Have you ever been to Sweden?</i>	8	91	1
<i>Do you have any Swedish acquaintances living in Poland?</i>	4	95	1
<i>Have you had any sporadic contacts with Swedes living in Poland?</i>	17	81	2
<i>Have you ever read any books written by Swedes or watched Swedish films?</i>	42	48	10
<i>Have you ever watched shows about Sweden on television?</i>	53	36	11

² Ibid. The same opinion is shared by almost one half of Spaniards (49%) and only 13% of Austrians.

³ Differences in expressions concerning these states are not statistically significant and, therefore, these countries can be listed in a random sequence.

How does a knowledge of Sweden based on literature and television shows affect Poles' initial associations about that country?

The first group of associations referred to Sweden's geographical location and its tourist attractions (tourism, sailing, the Baltic Sea, Scandinavia, Stockholm, environment, hard and cold climate). The other major group included associations referring to the Swedish economy (prosperity, affluence, high living standards, modern industry - Volvo and Scania) and a highly civilised lifestyle (cleanness, tidiness, order and good management). Much less frequent were historical associations ("deluge", history, Vikings), those referring to the Swedish culture and science (science, culture, art, film), and those referring to sports (sport, hockey, tennis, skiing, soccer, the latest lost match).

To sum up, it may be stated that Polish associations about Sweden were positive (tourism, industry, prosperity) or relatively indifferent (sport, history, etc.). Respondents did not mention any elements with decisively negative connotations.

Perception of a typical Swede

Most Polish respondents consider a typical Swede to be modern (72%, Table 8), well educated and tidy (over 60%), and disciplined, responsible, assiduous, and tolerant (over 55%). More than one half could not decide if a typical Swede was religious (they selected response 3 - in the middle of the scale).

Here too the only variable that differentiated respondents' opinions was their education - the higher the education, the more positive the response.

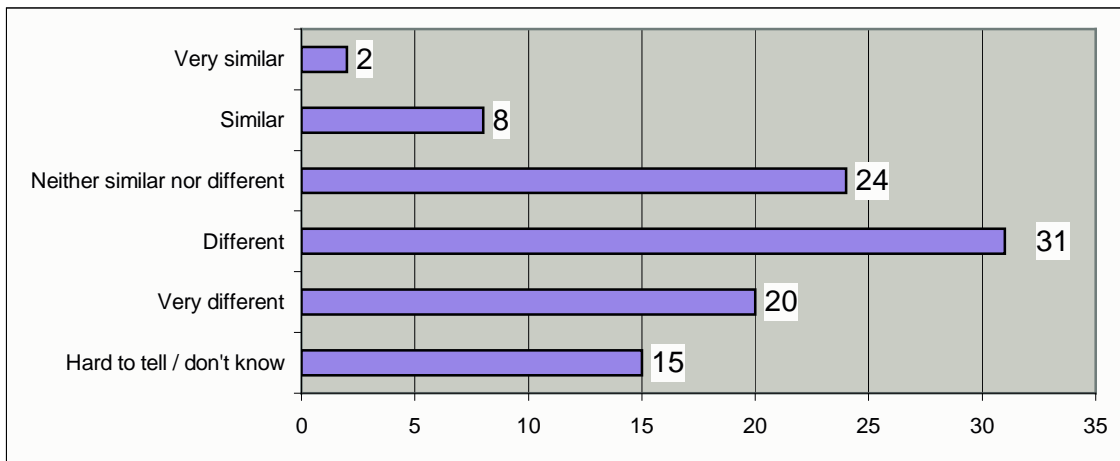
Table 8. Polish perception of a typical Swede (in percent)

	1	2	3	4	5	
assiduous	28	29	38	4	1	lazy
tolerant	26	29	37	5	2	intolerant
modern	39	33	23	3	2	backward/conservative
educated	28	35	33	3	1	uneducated
efficient	20	32	43	3	0.4	inefficient
honest	18	29	47	4	0.4	dishonest
friendly	19	31	42	7	1	unfriendly
tidy	28	33	33	4	1	sloppy
religious	5	10	57	19	9	non-religious
responsible	21	35	40	3	1	irresponsible
disciplined	25	33	36	4	1	insubordinate

Assessments were effected according to a five-grade scale, from 1 (ex. very assiduous) to 5 (ex. very lazy). Don't know responses were discarded.

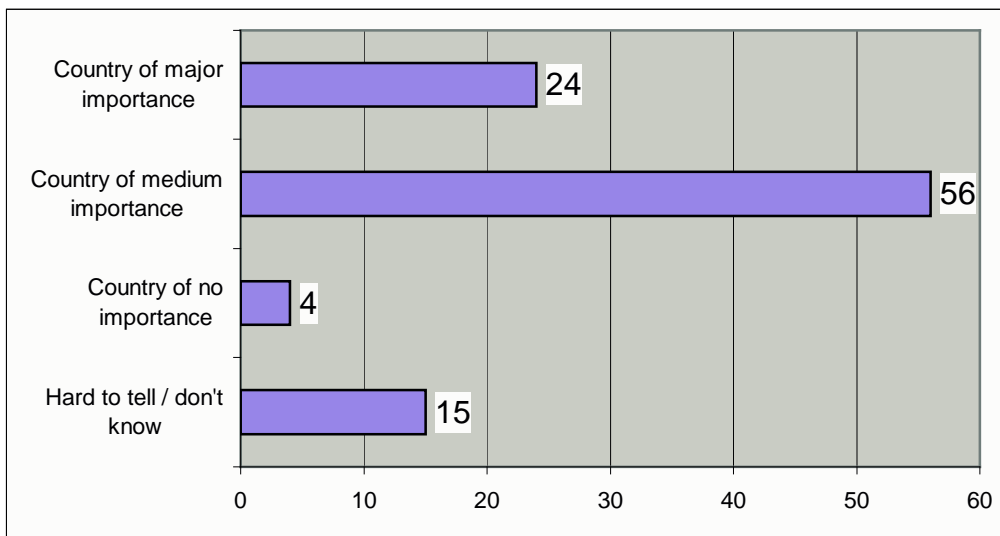
The Polish/Austrian study had shown that Poles considered themselves very dissimilar from Austrians. That feeling was even stronger when Poles compared themselves to Swedes.

Chart 1. Poles' opinions as to similarities/dissimilarities between Poles and Swedes (in percent)



In spite of a great deal of sympathy for Swedes, Poles seem to have a realistic opinion about Sweden's importance in Europe: 56% of respondents considered it to be a country of medium importance, whereas 24% thought of it as significant (Chart 2).

Chart 2. Poles' opinions about the European significance of Sweden (in percent)



Level of Poles' distance from Swedes

Knowing the positive image that Poles hold of a typical Swede, we might consider the level of distance they feel toward the inhabitants of Sweden (Table 9).¹

¹ The information about the level of closeness/separation between Poles and Swedes was obtained by using a question constructed according to the Bogardus scale.

Table 9. Level of distance felt by Poles to Swedes (in percent)

<i>Would you agree for a Swede to...</i>	Yes	No	Hard to tell / don't know
Visit Poland as a tourist?	98	0.2	1
Settle in Poland permanently?	68	20	12
Receive the Polish citizenship?	60	24	16
Work with you?	73	16	11
Be your closest neighbour?	76	12	11
Sit on the municipal council in your town?	38	45	17
Manage the company where you work?	55	29	16
Join the group of your close friends?	75	12	13
Become a member of your family through marriage with your child?	62	17	21

Poles are relatively well disposed to the presence of an alien Swede in their country. The easiest for Polish respondents to accept was a Swede as a tourist and - less obviously - as their closest neighbour (as many as 76% of affirmative responses) and friend (75%). Polish respondents were the least willing to see Swedish citizens sit on the municipal council of their town or manage the company where they worked (although a large number would have nothing against working with an alien Swede).

The level of distance dropped proportionally to the increase in the respondent's education. The age of respondents was also significant - younger individuals were more open to the presence of alien Swedes in our country.

A comparison of the distance felt toward Austrians, Spaniards and Swedes indicates that Poles are the most open toward their northern neighbour. However, it needs to be pointed out that differences in certain cases are not large enough to be statistically significant.

To conclude, Poles perceive Sweden and a typical Swede in a positive way. We associate Sweden with tourism (although few Poles had an opportunity to visit that country) and a highly developed economy, and we think of a typical Swede as an educated and tidy person, therefore different from a typical Pole. Poles declare their willingness to accept an alien Swede both as a tourist and neighbour, and even as a close friend.

Annex

Survey Information

Statistics presented in this report were obtained through surveys conducted with representative samples of adult inhabitants of Poland, Spain and Sweden.

The number of Polish participants in the samples amounted to 1029 (in the survey concerning the perception of Spain) and 1007 (in the survey concerning the perception of Sweden). The Polish surveys were conducted in March and November 1999 by Pracownia Badań Społecznych (*Social Research Workshop*) in Sopot.

The Spanish survey was conducted in March 1999 by Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas. The sample included 2490 persons.

The Swedish survey was conducted in December 1999 by the SOM Institute in Gothenburg. The sample included 1800 respondents.